recent initiative of Government to allow private airlines to operate on international routes;

(b) whether it is a fact that almost all the routes that have been granted to the private airlines are already being operated by Indian Airlines or Air India or both; and

(c) if so, whether the permission given to the private airlines will result in reduction in revenues of the public sector airlines from these routes and if so, to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) The decision to permit Indian scheduled carriers to operate on international sectors is expected to improve the utilisation of the traffic rights by the Indian side, as well as gradually expand international connectivity from India.

(b) Based on their requests, private airlines have been permitted to operate to USA, UK, Belgium, Singapore and Malaysia. Out of this Belgium is neither served by Air India nor by Indian Airlines.

(c) The traffic size on most of these routes is quite high and has been registering constant growth. As per Government's assesment, with more flights on these routes, there would be significant shift of traffic from the indirect carriers of third countries to direct carriers of India and the concerned country. As such there would be ample commercial opportunity for all Indian carriers on these routes.

Competition act

20. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have put in place Competition Act recently and if so, its basic aims and objectives;

(b) whether a Competition Commission as envisaged in the Act has been set up and if so, when; and

(c) the work done by the Commission so far and impact, if any, made in creating competition awareness in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA): (a) Yes, Sir. The objective of the Act is to provide, for the establishment of a Commission, to prevent practices having adverse effect on competition, to promote and sustain competition in markets, to protect the interests of consumers, and to ensure freedom of trade carried on by participants in markets in India, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(b) and (c) The Competition Commission of India was set up on 14th October, 2003. The Commission at present has one Member. The Competition Act was subject to legal challenges and the Supreme Court had stayed judicial functioning of the Commission. The Supreme Court has delivered its Judgement on 20.01.2005. So far, the Commission has undertaken preparatory and foundational work required for setting up a new organisation, organised/participated in a number of competition awareness activities, set up a web-site, attempted draft rules and regulations and has interacted with academic bodies and professional institutes for inclusion of competition policy and law in the course curriculum. These activities were aimed at generating greater awareness about competition issues amongst relevant stakeholders.

Registered companies

†21. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of registered companies in the country;

(b) the number of inactive companies out of the registered companies;

(c) whether there is any scheme under consideration of Government to close those companies which are not operating; and

(d) if not, the scheme formulated by Government for the operation of all the registered companies and the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA): (a) The total number of registered companies in the country as on 31.10.2004 is 6,65,221.

(b) Although there are inactive companies, it is not feasible to indicate the exact number of such companies.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.